



**AFRICAN WILDLIFE**  
FOUNDATION

# CONSERVING AFRICA'S ELEPHANTS

---

2021 Elephant Conservation Progress Report



African Wildlife Foundation  
1100 New Jersey Ave. SE, Suite 900  
Washington, DC 20003  
202.939.3333  
[www.awf.org](http://www.awf.org)

## Advancing Elephant Conservation in Africa

Despite the challenges that were presented last year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) remains committed to ensuring and working toward stable and increasing elephant populations across critical landscapes in Africa. Although travel restrictions due to COVID affected the implementation of some activities and resulted in the loss of tourism revenue in many landscapes, AWF is grateful for the continued support for elephant conservation among its donors. Going forward, AWF will continue to focus on elephant conservation as an urgent priority to mitigate increasing threats from habitat loss, poaching, and human-wildlife conflict. The following report details accomplishments on AWF's approach to elephant protection through a strategy that focuses on in-situ wildlife conservation, reduction in poaching and illegal wildlife trafficking.

AWF is grateful for the generous support of our partners, especially in these unprecedented times, and is pleased to provide this year's 2021 Elephant Conservation Progress Report. Highlighted are achievements made possible with your support alongside AWF's future objectives as the organization continues to prioritize conserving African elephants. With a mission of ensuring wildlife and wild lands thrive in modern Africa, AWF is proud to be celebrating sixty years of conservation success across the continent.

## Stop the Killing



AWF conserves elephants by supporting rangers and scouts who are the “boots on the ground” and protect highly endangered animals from poachers by providing and facilitating training in surveillance, tracking, wilderness survival, and other essential skills. Just as critical to elephant survival, are community projects that alleviate human-wildlife conflict (HWC) and improve livelihoods in the process. These projects create sustainable livelihoods for farmers, serve as a deterrent to elephants from destroying farmlands, and mitigate HWC - one of the leading threats to wildlife after habitat loss and wildlife trafficking.

## Key Achievements

**Cameroon:** While the results of the December 2020 elephant population census are yet to be reported, there have been no records of elephant poaching in this West African country in the past five years. The elephant population is believed to be stable. To improve ranger skills in the landscape, AWF facilitated multiple trainings for 30 rangers in data collection, navigation, GPS use, human rights, CyberTracker, and Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART) – a technology that allows protected area authorities to proactively manage patrols and therefore wildlife populations. This past year, AWF

observed increased human activity in protected areas and, as a result, increased patrol efforts by 15% in 2020. This led to the recovery of more hunting tools, including 29 guns in 2020 compared to 9 guns in 2019.

**Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):** For over a decade, AWF has worked in DRC protecting critical populations of forest elephants and preserving their dense forest habitat. A critical partner to AWF is DRC's wildlife authority, the Institute for the Conservation of Nature (ICCN). AWF supports ICCN by funding and managing eco-guards in the Bili-Uele Landscape, for example, to ensure they have essential equipment and provisions for long patrols. Elsewhere in DRC, AWF recorded nearly 600 elephants migrating to Virunga National Park from the neighboring Queen Elizabeth National Park in Uganda. This is a great success for a once volatile landscape, demonstrating the viability of its habitat for elephants.

**Kenya:** Located in southern Kenya along the border with Tanzania, the Tsavo Conservation Area (TCA) supports more than 300 wildlife scouts from the neighboring communities to protect elephants and other wildlife within the ranch. This past year, AWF trained 52 scouts on wilderness skills, first aid, human-wildlife conflict mitigation, and understanding of the country's Wildlife Act. To help boost patrols in Tsavo, AWF also gave desert boots to the scouts at two sites – Taita Wildlife Conservancy and Kasigau Ranch, both major migratory corridors for elephants connecting Tsavo West and Tsavo East National Parks. At Taita Ranch, AWF trained 33 scouts in CyberTracker and SMART technologies, species identification, court procedures, first response, and wildlife crimes and offenses. AWF also supported a 21-day training of 50 scouts in Taita and equipped the participants with uniforms, safety boots, and food rations. Additionally, AWF donated a vehicle to the Taita Wildlife Conservancies Association to support wildlife monitoring and protection within the landscape. In Kasigau, AWF trained 21 scouts on SMART and CyberTracker, and provided five mobile phones and one laptop for data collection and patrol analysis to ensure reliable monitoring and data collection in the landscape.



Figure 1: Kasigau Scouts at a ceremony in Kenya

In collaboration with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), AWF identified six HWC hotspots within the Tsavo ecosystem and facilitated meetings with the community stakeholders. The discussions focused on HWC incidences, creating awareness on agri-businesses, and training of 240 farmers on effective conflict mitigation strategies. AWF also equipped farmers with pressure horns and LED torches, and KWS rangers with fireworks – a proven deterrent of wildlife in other landscapes. Further, AWF provided chili and fertilizer to 96 farmers near the Tsavo West National Park to help protect their livelihoods from elephant incursions.

**Tanzania:** The Tsavo-Mkomazi Landscape is a critical transboundary landscape between Kenya and Tanzania, and supports an elephant population that has been increasing since 1988. The last elephant census was completed in June 2021, with an unofficial number of 14,000 elephants, which indicates a 14% annual increase. AWF is proud to report that there were no incidences of elephant poaching this year. AWF facilitated two joint and concurrent patrols between scouts from both countries to improve cross-border collaboration and conducted basic paramilitary training for 150 scouts in the Tsavo-Mkomazi Landscape. AWF also provided 6,420 liters of fuel to six districts in Tanzania to support regular patrols, enabling the Tanzania response team to arrest two poachers in Rombo and recovered 36 snares. The team also mitigated 48 HWC incidents and led elephants out of local communities and farmlands back to protected areas where they are safe from retaliatory killings. AWF also facilitated anti-poaching

training sessions, provided anti-poaching equipment and patrol rations to 20 wildlife monitors in Tanzania. To aid patrol data collection, AWF trained 20 scouts in CyberTracker and SMART in Tanzania.

Additionally, AWF trained 50 beekeepers from the Same District on best practices. The training took place for three consecutive days and trained participants on beekeeping, using beehive fences to deter elephants from invading farmlands and community livelihoods in the Mkomazi ecosystem. To protect habitat from unsustainable use, AWF completed a land-use plan for five villages in the Lushoto district in Tanzania.

**Uganda:** The elephant population in Uganda is on a steady rise after the devastating loss of over 28,000 elephants between the 1970s and early 1980s due to civil unrest. In the last census in 2017, the elephant population in the landscape increased to 5,808, up from 2,000 elephants in 1983. Since 2013, AWF has trained 282 community scouts (202 in Kidepo Valley National Park, 65 in Murchison Falls National Park, and 15 in Lake Mburo National Park) to collect ecological data and conduct anti-poaching patrols within the landscape. This past year, AWF also trained 21 Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) data managers and 120 data collectors in the use of the SMART and CyberTracker, and equipped participants with the needed surveillance and reporting tools to carry out operations within the landscape. AWF provided necessary technology such as smartphones, GPS, laptops, and cameras to UWA for data collection and analysis. Additionally, AWF continues to support human-elephant conflict (HEC) mitigation in Uganda and since 2013, has trained 378 chili farmers in Murchison Falls and 34 farmers in Kidepo Valley landscapes. This effort has aided the protection of farmlands from elephant invasion and destruction while simultaneously providing sustainable livelihood opportunities for communities.

AWF also conducted a comparative analysis of threats to elephants before the COVID-19 pandemic (January to December 2019) and during the pandemic (January to December 2020). This analysis highlighted that COVID-related losses in livelihoods have led to an increase in threats to elephants in the landscape. Despite the rise of poaching incidences, AWF and local partners worked tirelessly to protect elephants by retrieving hunting and other weapons used such as snares and spears.

**Zimbabwe:** The elephant population in the Lower Zambezi Landscape is steadily increasing with an estimate of 13,000 elephants, a 2,000 increase since the last elephant census in 2014. Elephant poaching across the landscape has significantly decreased, with Mana Pools National Park recording zero poaching incidences in 2020 and 2021. AWF and local partners are working to mitigate threats facing elephants to ensure the elephant population continues to increase or at least stabilize. In partnership with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, AWF established the River Patrol Unit to patrol the Zambezi River during the day and night. This year alone, with the support of AWF, the team has conducted 1,730 extended patrols, 648 mobile patrols, 1,435 strategic patrols, 400 hours of boat patrols, and 11,671 hours of foot patrols. AWF also mitigated HEC by supporting 52 chili farmers with needed equipment to ensure effective use of chili to deter elephants from farmland. Due to the loss of tourism caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, AWF supplemented ranger salaries and supported patrol units with supplies such as fuel, food, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in Mana Pools and Mbire District with patrol rations and training for scouts.

### Next Steps

- AWF plans to assist in developing species action and recovery plans in Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, and other countries with significant elephant populations or potential for recovery. Additionally, AWF plans to help elephant range states implement their National Elephant Action Plans (NEAPs), which addresses capacity building, anti-poaching, countering wildlife trafficking, mitigating conflicts, securing habitat, coordinating between stakeholders and countries, and recovering and growing elephant populations.
- In Cameroon, AWF plans to develop a HEC mitigation strategy and actively include communities in elephant management practices by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. This work will be

supported by plans to continue monitoring elephant movements with camera traps to update the distribution of elephants. AWF also plans to ensure effective law enforcement operations by supporting ranger patrols and training.

- In the Tsavo-Mkomazi Landscape, AWF will continue supporting transboundary collaboration and enhance scout networks by introducing more wildlife monitoring units in critical areas. Plans are also underway to enhance the governance and leadership of the ranches through land use planning, development of management plans, and capacity building training.

## Stop the Trafficking



## Canines for Conservation Program

The illegal wildlife trade (IWT) and environmental crimes are estimated to be worth approximately \$8 to \$10 billion per year. Not only does this contribute to the decimation of species and degradation of ecosystems, but IWT also undermines good governance and deprives developing countries of billions of dollars in lost revenue and development opportunities. To tackle the trafficking of wildlife and wildlife products, AWF's Canines for Conservation Program (C4CP) works with national wildlife authorities in various countries to develop and deploy canine teams to find wildlife and wildlife products at strategic ports or borders of entry and exit. These detection and tracker dogs enhance the ability of law enforcement to stop the illegal trafficking of wildlife products, act as a deterrent to wildlife poaching in high-risk landscapes, and ultimately curb poaching. Since the inception of C4CP, AWF has trained and deployed over 70 dog handlers and 48 dogs to transit points in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Mozambique, and Botswana, with expansion plans to Cameroon and Ethiopia. To date, AWF supports nine detection dog units in five African countries and four tracker dog units in three African countries and is determined to expand the capacity of wildlife authorities across the continent to detect and stop illegal wildlife trafficking.

## Key Achievements

**Botswana:** This past year, AWF launched mobile searches across primary entries and exists in Maun and Kasane. Between July and September 2020 alone, the team searched 907 vehicles and 2,836 luggage in three different cities. AWF also facilitated maintenance training with the Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP) and, in collaboration with DWNP, deployed teams to the Khawa and Mathathane border areas. AWF and DWNP are also working on finalizing the canine strategy for Botswana.

**Cameroon:** In November 2020, AWF finalized hiring a technical advisor to the canine unit responsible for the acclimatization of the dogs and the continuous training of the team in Yaoundé. The technical advisor completed his induction at the training facility in Usa River in Tanzania, after which he traveled to Yaoundé to start the dog mobilization process. The process includes acquiring the necessary import documentation for the dogs, overseeing the completion of the canine facility, procuring kennel care

equipment, and sourcing and contracting vendors for veterinary care and feeds. While the team awaits the deployment of the dogs, AWF has procured and delivered all equipment needed to support the operation, including the necessary infrastructure to house and care for the dogs.

**Kenya:** The Kenya canine teams continued their operations and intelligence-led searches with positive results in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Naivasha. Between July 2020 and March 2021, the team searched 258 flights and 3,831,450 cargos and conducted six intelligence-led operations, leading to the arrest of 12 suspects and the recovery of 104 kilograms of raw ivory. Four of the arrested suspects in Mombasa's Moi International Airport were trying to sell cow horns as ivory. In April 2021, AWF deployed four detection dogs from Usa River in Tanzania to Naivasha in Kenya and trained dogs and four handlers.

**Mozambique:** Since deploying the dogs at the Maputo International Airport, no wildlife products have been found as the airport is no longer considered a safe route for trafficking illegal wildlife products. The Maputo canine team remains an excellent example of how the canine detection program is a deterrent to wildlife traffickers. Between July 2020 and June 2021, the canine team searched 108 flights, 21,600 cargos, and 22,688 luggage. Additionally, a canine unit vehicle was also procured and equipped with air conditioning and safe dog transport boxes, making it easier for the dogs to be deployed to stations to carry out random searches in different parts of the airport.

**Tanzania:** In Dar es Salaam, AWF works with Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) to support the detection canine unit's operations, conduct searches at the Julius Nyerere International Airport, and intelligence-led operations in southern Tanzania. AWF also works with the Arusha/Northern Tanzania unit to conduct airport searches at the Kilimanjaro International Airport cargo and baggage section, road searches at Namanga and Makuyu roads, and intelligence-led operations. Between July 2020 and June 2021, the canine teams searched 2,089 flights, 151,155 luggage, 86,271 cargo boxes, and over 700 vehicles. The team also conducted thirteen intelligence-led operations, some of which led to the recovery of 110 kilograms of raw ivory and the arrest of 28 suspects. In Dar es Salaam, AWF also handed over the completed and furnished canine facility and the canine team to TAWA while rehabilitating accommodation for handlers in the facility.

**Uganda:** In February 2021, AWF completed constructing a canine facility in Karuma, Murchison Falls. The unit has a kennel that can house six dogs with a play area at the back, an office and store for keeping dog equipment and food, and six self-contained dog-handler accommodations. AWF also procured a vehicle to aid the Karuma canine team in its operations and delivered four detection dogs and supplies to the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) in Karuma. Within a few hours of deployment, the canine team joined an intelligence-led operation in Agago District in Northern Uganda, which led to the arrest of a local council chairman and the recovery of 24 kilograms of ivory. The Uganda canine teams in Entebbe and Karuma continue to engage in detection operations and intelligence-led searches at the Entebbe



**Figure 2: Canine teams at the newly constructed unit in Karuma, Murchison Falls**

International Airport. Between July 2020 and June 2021, the teams had searched 2,128,941 cargo boxes and 200,048 bags of luggage and reported that no wildlife products were found. The teams conducted nine intelligence-led operations in four additional districts, resulting in the arrest of eight suspects and the recovery of 54 kilograms of raw ivory.

---

## Next Steps

AWF is working to establish detection canine units in Ethiopia and procure and customize canine vehicles to support operations. Currently, AWF has procured four working dogs that are in training at

Usa River to be deployed to Ethiopia when the canine facility is operational. AWF is also working on deploying dogs to Yaoundé in Cameroon to kickstart the program (which was delayed due to COVID-related restrictions), re-deploy experienced dogs to Naivasha, and new dogs to Nairobi to create a good balance of experienced and new dogs in both teams. This year, AWF will continue to maintain operations in Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Uganda with a plan to expand to other illegal wildlife trafficking hotspots on the continent.

### Wildlife Law Enforcement Program

AWF operates a Wildlife Law Enforcement Program to ensure that wildlife crime scene first responders, law enforcement officers, government investigators, prosecutors, and judicial officers of wildlife crime cases are adequately trained on proper evidence management, prosecution-guided investigations, utilization of supporting legislations and deterrent sentencing of wildlife offenders. This pioneering program has court-monitoring programs in Kenya, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

### Key Achievements

**Kenya:** In June 2021, AWF in collaboration with KWS, launched the ‘*On the Job Support for Prosecutors and Investigators*’ in Machakos County, Kenya. The mentorship program aims to ensure the successful investigation and prosecution of wildlife cases, and broaden and deepen knowledge and skills in investigating and prosecuting wildlife crimes. The mentorship program is scheduled to run for a year and is facilitated by experienced mentors in prosecution and investigation. AWF also supported the critical updates to the KWS law enforcement academy curriculum to address emerging challenges in wildlife conservation and wildlife law enforcement, and to keep law enforcement officers abreast of the new challenges and how to tackle them. Additionally, AWF organized an intensive digital and electronic evidence workshop for 23 senior wildlife crime investigators to improve digital and electronic evidence management in wildlife crimes.



Figure 3: Participants at a wildlife law enforcement mentorship program in Kenya

**Ethiopia:** In July 2021, AWF, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority (EWCA), held a sensitization workshop themed ‘*Strengthening Law Enforcement Capacity Through Interagency Collaboration in Ethiopia*’ for the members of the Environmental Crimes Unit (ECU). The workshop is part of the ‘*Wildlife Judicial and Prosecutorial Assistance Training Series*’ and helps create a better understanding of international and national wildlife policies and legislation. The workshop also focused on investigating and prosecuting wildlife crimes to strengthen inter-agency communication and collaboration in Ethiopia. Participants represented 12 law enforcement agencies working for the Bole International Airport.

**Uganda:** In April 2021, AWF partnered with the Ugandan government to conduct two digital and electronic evidence workshops to ensure that wildlife crime investigations incorporate digital evidence to achieve successful prosecution and deterrent sentencing. Twenty participants attended the training and were instructed on the different kinds of digital and electronic evidence and the methods of collecting, preserving, and presenting electronic evidence in court. The workshop was designed to improve participant's skills in the proper identification, acquisition, storage, chain of custody, and case management of digital evidence and legal and human rights-related frameworks.

## Stop the Demand



As home to the world's second-largest economy and the host of the Convention on Biological Diversity's Conference of Parties 15 (CBD-CoP 15), China has tremendous influence in charting the path for biodiversity conservation over the next decade. China is also the largest ivory market globally and therefore educating and raising awareness of the dangers of elephant poaching and trafficking in China is critical to ending the ivory trade and prioritizing discussions around elephant conservation at the CBD-CoP15. Despite the challenges and delays caused by the pandemic, AWF has continued to prioritize its China program over the past year, strengthening Africa-China relationships, particularly among youth, and advocating for zero demands for wildlife and wildlife products.

## Key Achievements

- In October 2020, AWF hosted an exhibition with Shanghai Zoo, themed '*A Shared Future for You and Me: Safeguarding Africa's Threatened Biodiversity.*' The exhibition's goal was to create awareness of the role of the Chinese public in securing the future of African wildlife, including critical species like African elephants. The exhibition's theme was strongly linked to the theme of the CBD-CoP15, where the leading agenda for biodiversity in the next ten years will be set.
- Since April 2020, AWF and Friends of Nature (FoN) have held three virtual dialogues between African and Chinese youth to recognize and amplify youth voices from the global south in the CBD process. This year, AWF hosted a webinar where the role of tourism in protecting wildlife, including the African elephant, was explored. The Africa-China youth dialogues provide a platform to connect young conservationists in Africa, China, and the world for mutual awareness, capacity building, and collaboration.
- As the secretariat for African civil society organizations and the African Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA), AWF facilitates and continues to support ACBA's partnership with the Chinese Civil Society Alliance for Biodiversity Conservation (CSABC) to foster meaningful collaboration between Chinese and African civil society on and beyond the CoP15. ACBA and CSABC convened their first consultative dialogue in July 2020, with 70 participants from across Africa and China. In April 2021, ACBA and CSABC hosted a webinar, attracting approximately 250 African and Chinese participants. Discussing Community Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM), the workshop recognized the



fundamental role of communities in sustainable conservation projects, the successful protection of African and Chinese wildlife, and CBNRM tools that support elephant conservation.

### Next Steps

In 2021, AWF plans to host an exhibition at the Hongshan Zoo in Nanjing, building upon the successes of previous exhibitions that engaged the Chinese public in Shanghai since 2019 and in Beijing since 2018.

### The Value of Your Support

The critical work of safeguarding African elephants would not have been possible without the generous support of our partners. Thank you for your continued commitment to AWF and a keen interest in AWF's elephant conservation efforts to accomplish AWF's mission and vision to see an Africa where sustainable development includes thriving wildlife populations and wildlands as a cultural and economic asset for Africa's future generations.

Thank you for your unwavering support and for making a difference for elephants and communities across Africa.

